

The Little Way

Homily for October 1, 2022
Memorial St Therese of Lisieux

You and I are called to be a saint. This is the purpose for which we were born.

Now this vocation doesn't require for us to be declared a capital-S Saint by the Catholic Church. We just need to be holy, or set apart for God—a lowercase-s saint. It's no simple task, though, to close the gap between who I am and who I am called to be. This is where St. Thérèse of Lisieux, or the "Little Flower," can be our big sister and show us the way.

Before dying of tuberculosis in 1897 at 24, the cloistered Carmelite nun pledged to spend her time in heaven doing good on the earth. So solicitous a saint is worth getting to know better if only because nobody tires of calling the friend who picks up every time.

The Little Flower left assurance for all who feel, as she did, they lack the heroic excellence in their own littleness. She looked at the saints who went before her and felt herself a grain of sand in comparison to the towering mountains of their lives. St. Thérèse of Lisieux needed another way to get to heaven, so she prayerfully came up with one: the "Little Way."

She understood that "our Lord does not so much look at the greatness of our actions, or even their difficulty, as the love with which we do them." The occasion to do great deeds, after all, may never come to pass, or when it does it may find us wanting in courage. Small deeds, on the other hand, are everywhere, and when done with great love, they cease to be small.

It is this theme that is at the heart of the Gospel for today. Upon their return from their first missionary journey the 70 were overjoyed at the great deeds they were able to do in Jesus' name as Jesus saw "Satan fall from heaven". But notice what Jesus says:

Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.¹

What a beautiful way for us to remember who we are. Our names written in heaven. Heaven the realm and state of being where all deeds are done with great love because in heaven we will be In Love. How freeing for us to discover this simple but profound truth.

It is to realize that St. Thérèse's little way is none other than the way of Jesus who in today's reading then goes on to praise the Father that the way of the Lord is revealed to those who are

¹ The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (Lk 10:20). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

infants – those who moment by moment know they are dependent on the love of the Father, in order to live the life of love; just as an infant is dependent on his or her mother for the gift of life.

It is in keeping with this spiritual law of heaven that inspired St. Thérèse; and thereby led the Church to not only declare her a Saint but Doctor of the Church. For indeed blessed were her eyes that saw so clearly how the incarnation is continued in each of our lives when, to quote her, we realize:

The splendour of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm. If every tiny flower wanted to be a rose, spring would lose its loveliness.

St. Thérèse delighted in being that tiny flower. How fitting the saint with a childlike love of God would intuit that the contrast between big and small has a different meaning to man, who is limited by time and space, than to God, who isn't. Doing small things with great love made the Little Flower an everyday saint, and then it made her an official canonized saint and doctor of the Church. Her life proves what we do with the ordinary can make us extraordinary. There is nothing little about that way.²

² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-canonized-saint-who-began-as-an-everyday-one-st-therese-of-lisieux-catholic-feast-day-little-flower-way-11664306793>